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BODWELL, JOSEPH CONNER
An address, delivered at the
funeral of Ella Chichester
Northrop

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AN
ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

The Funeral

OF

ELLA CHICHESTER NORTHROP,

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1861.

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

SAXONVILLE, MASS.

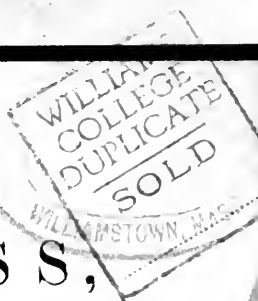
BY REV. J. C. BODWELL.

BOSTON:

S. CHISM,—FRANKLIN PRINTING HOUSE,

HAWLEY STREET, CORNER OF FRANKLIN.

1861.



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HAWLEY STREET, CORNER OF FRANKLIN.

1861.

R.H.

Ella Chichester,

ELDEST DAUGHTER OF

Rev. Birdsey G. Northrop,

DIED VERY SUDDENLY,

OF DIPHTHERIA,

On Thursday morning, October 3, 1861,

Aged fourteen years and ten months.

ADDRESS.

“Tis God that lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave;
He gives, and (blessed be his name!)
He takes but what he gave.

“Peace, all our troubled passions, then,
Let each rebellious sigh
Be silent at his sovereign will,
And every murmur die.”

“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

“I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou did'st it.”

“The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

“He maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.”

“Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?” And she answered, “It is well.”

WHEN the heart is bowed down and crushed under a huge sorrow, and seems as if it must bleed its own life away, there is one consideration—if there be another I know not what it is—which can bring re-

lief. That stricken Hebrew father leaned upon this consideration for support when he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." The patriarch felt its power, and added praise to submission amid the wreck of his earthly estate; "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Jesus entered, for his people, into the same strong hold of faith and rest; "The cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

This one commanding consideration is the hand of God in our afflictions. That which God does must be right, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. The deeply affecting event which has brought us here at this time was no accident. Sudden and sad and dark exceedingly to us, it was interwoven in God's great plan, and came to pass by deliberate pre-arrangement and fixed law of sequence, not less than the fulness of the autumn, or the return of the planets in their annual revolutions. It came because the plan of God was very good, and the time appointed had arrived. Her days were determined, the number of her months was with God; he had appointed her bounds that she could not pass.

We are called upon devoutly to acknowledge his great and peculiar mercy in having so prepared the way for this calamity, that it should not fall

with an absolutely crushing force. When, at the close of the last year, Ella communicated to her parents her full and deliberate decision to be a Christian, was there not a joy in these now stricken hearts, deep and unutterable, because great preferment had come to this their first-born child? How small a thing had it been in comparison, if a jewelled crown had been set upon that fair brow! To have a place assigned her among the sons and daughters of God, and to recognize therein the Divine faithfulness and the fulfilment of the covenant, this was a joy with which a stranger might not intermeddle. Could it once have entered the thoughts of these parents, that God was preparing their darling child for yet higher honors, and their own hearts for the otherwise overwhelming sorrow of this day? Eventful year in the history of this bereaved and weeping household! Year of a double promotion, how speedily accomplished! I know, my dear brother and sister, how much it was in your hearts to have done for this beloved child, if she had been spared to you. How freely you would have lavished upon her all the richest gifts in the power of your hand to confer. Yet how far short it must have fallen of what her Redeemer has done for her. Her eyes closed forever on this world and all its attractions, how far transcending in beauty and blessedness are the scenes amid which she is moving now, clothed with a divine

radiance, filled with a holy and unmingled joy. The father of David did not nurse the sharp pang of parting, when his child was withdrawn from his early home and his shepherd's calling, and promoted to be a king. Mordecai had only tears of joy to shed, when Esther, who had been to him as his own child, was preferred by Ahasuerus to all the beauty of his court, and a fair crown set upon her head. An overmastering joy shall, doubtless, succeed to the sadness of this early parting, when you shall consider more calmly than is possible in this day of rough tempest, the high exaltation to which the Redeemer's mercy has raised her.

Neither must it be supposed, because she was beautiful to look upon, intelligent and accomplished beyond her years, overflowing with fond affection, full of music and song, a bright sun-beam in her father's house, attracting all by her sweetness and vivacity and self-forgetfulness, that any of these treasures are lost. He by whom they were bestowed has a place for them all in heaven. There are none on earth so fair as they who wander by the crystal river, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. The sweetest voices will sing far more sweetly when they shall stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion amid the hundred and forty and four thousand harpers harping with their harps. In part, heaven is the gathering up of the treasures of this world. "The

kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it."

It was a saying of the fathers when the young were called away, "My Beloved is gone down into his garden to gather lilies." Is there a flower so fragrant or so beautiful, that he who gave it all its attraction may not gather it to wear in his bosom, or to weave into a garland for his own brow?

"The dear delights we here enjoy,
And fondly call our own,
Are but short favors borrowed now,
To be repaid anon."

I know, my dear brother and sister, that, from this sad day, your pilgrimage must be under a broad, overhanging cloud, which will fling its shadow over all earthly things. But you will remember that there is another side to this sombre cloud, bright with ineffable radiance; and sometimes the brightness of that upper side will pierce the shadows, shedding a mild lustre on your pathway, and a gleam of God's sunshine will be in your heart.

As time passes on, and the cares and responsibilities of life command your energies, the keen edge of your sorrow will be abated, and you will be filled with submission and thankfulness; but this wound will not be healed, and you will feel that it cannot be healed fully, till you shall press again to your bosom your first-born child. The pleasant thought that she awaits

your coming where all tears are wiped away, will be a solace many times under the trials and difficulties of the journey, and a strong attraction to hasten your footsteps in your homeward way. Pleasant memories, too, will blend with your sorrows and relieve their sharpness. Chief among these, — a cluster of rose buds in your cypress wreath, — will be the clear and varied evidences which appeared in her daily life while in perfect health, and filled with the hope of many years, that she was a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those hallowed fire-side exercises of the Sabbath evening which had been kept up without interruption from her infancy, and in which Ella took a lively and growing interest, supplying in the review and accounts of the public religious services of the day what the younger children failed to give, will be invested henceforward with a new sacredness, while the sight of the vacant chair in that little circle will greatly encourage and confirm parental faith in the God of the everlasting covenant, that the instructions and prayers which have had so early and blessed an issue in the case of the first-born, may lead to a like happy result for all the rest.

I see in this weeping assembly those to whom Ella was very dear as a schoolmate and friend. They will not need to be reminded of the many beautiful traits which excited so much affection and so little envy in

their bosoms. You will love to remember her intelligence and vivacity, her bounding step and laughing eye and merry, musical voice. You felt the influence of her example in regular and punctual attendance at school, diligence in study, and cheerful compliance with the wishes of her teachers, as well as obedience to their authority. In addition to all these, you will remember that God had given her an unusually sweet and unselfish temper, a precious boon to herself and to all her friends and associates, filling her own soul with an unconscious joy when she was imparting most of happiness to others. But there are some of you who now remember, as most precious of all, that simple piety of Ella, and how kindly she sought to win you to the Saviour, in whom she had so early learned to trust. That early piety was the fruit of a great change wrought in her heart by the Holy Spirit of God. For, with all the sweetness and beauty of her natural character, Ella deeply felt that she must be born again before she could enter into the kingdom of God. Under a deep sense of her sinfulness she trusted alone in the cross of Christ for salvation. On the last sabbath of the year 1860 she said to her father, "I am older than you were when you gave your heart to the Saviour, and now I mean to be a Christian from this time, and to begin the new year in the service of God." At the evening meeting of that holy Sabbath, the pastor of the Church requested

as many as desired the prayers of Christians for themselves to rise. Impelled by her own strong desire and the purpose she had uttered, yet restrained by her sensitive and shrinking spirit, the dear child nestled to her father's side and asked him what she should do. Receiving for answer, that she must obey the promptings of her own heart, she deliberately rose and stood alone in that full assembly, serene and unfaltering. During the few appointed months that came after, her life was in harmony with the solemn vow recorded on that day. Private prayer was a pleasant duty, regularly and conscientiously performed. When absent from home, she loved to retire for a season, from the liveliest social scenes, in order that she might keep with her mother the hour appointed for their mutual remembrance of each other at the throne of grace during their separation.

Ella had a few simple questions for self-examination which she committed to memory and frequently used. These questions were the following, suggested by our Lord's searching inquiry to Peter: "Lovest thou me?"

1. Do I love my Saviour's character?
2. Do I love his truth and to meditate upon his Word?
3. Do I love his kingdom and strive to cherish his cause as my own?

4. Do I love to please him ?
5. Do I love to trust in him ?
6. Do I love to pray to him ?

"I hope I can reply affirmatively to them all," she used to say.

Whether the great change took place in Ella at or near the time at which she expressed the determination to be a Christian, it would be exceedingly difficult to say. In the case of those who are trained up, as she was, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, a considerable interval frequently elapses between the period of conversion to God and the springing up of hope in the heart. Her convictions of sin were deep and clear, not tumultuous and agitating. This is the usual experience of the children of the godly, although they almost invariably protest, with much earnestness, the precise contrary, and for the very obvious reason that their emotions of sorrow fall so far short of their convictions of sin.

Before she had ventured to indulge a hope that she was herself a child of God, she felt it to be a duty to urge the claims of Christ upon her associates, and she did not hesitate, nor shrink from its performance. On the next day after she had avowed her desire and full purpose to be a Christian, she tenderly importuned some of her schoolmates to join her in endeavoring to lead a religious life. It appeared to her to be so reasonable and so easy a thing to love and obey

Jesus Christ, that she was sanguine of success in her attempts to bring others to him. She expressed great joy to her parents, as one and another of her companions resolved to seek the Lord, and as great disappointment and grief when such efforts seemed to fail.

But all that is past forever, and the form which lies before us, so beautiful and serene, as if only a gentle sleep had fallen upon Ella, is unconscious of all that is here taking place. How like a dream this sudden change from full, joyous life, and vigorous health that never knew an interruption, to the stillness of death! She has faded with the first fading leaves of this delicious autumn. One short month ago, who would have thought of *her* as marked for an early exit, with her fine constitution, and her unfailing physical vigor and elasticity, guarded well by her habits of exercise in rowing, skating, bowling, and all healthful sports, judiciously blended with careful mental training.

A week ago yesterday she took her accustomed place in the High School, apparently in perfect health. At the morning recess she returned home, complaining of indisposition with soreness of throat, and lay down upon the bed from which she was never to rise. On the following days, up to Wednesday evening of the present week, she was cheerful and hopeful, sitting up and arranging her own hair

without a sign of weariness, when her stay was reckoned in hours. Not a thought was entertained but of her speedy recovery. Cheering letters were sent to her father, who was engaged in professional duties far away, and on Thursday morning after she had closed her eyes in the last sleep, the post brought a letter from him in return, expressing the deep thankfulness of a heart relieved by the latest tidings that had reached him from his home. The family retired to rest on Wednesday night, with the pleasant expectation that the morning would find her refreshed and improved. At two hours after midnight, a change was manifest; all were called to her bed-side, and medical aid was immediately summoned. But it was painfully evident now that the case had passed beyond the reach of human skill. Her breathing became oppressive, and she suffered much. A dear friend who sat near, asked her if she would not like to be at rest; to which she calmly replied: "If He calls me, I shall be glad to go. Pray for me, aunty, that he will forgive all my sins, and take me to himself."

"Can you look to your Saviour for rest and peace?"

"Yes, aunty, I do look to him," was the response.

In the words of this friend — "She seemed not to die, but gently falling asleep to find the rest for which she had prayed."

Within an hour of her departure, when the difficulty of breathing had greatly increased, she said to

her mother that she must soon die unless she found relief. "Can you not trust yourself with your Saviour, my beloved child?" her mother enquired. That voice thrilled all the strong and tender cords which bound her to this world, yet moved her not from her settled confidence and sweet submission. "If he thinks it best," the dear girl replied, "I shall be glad to get well; but, if it is his will ——." The rest was heard by the angels who bore her away.

Happy child of a Christian home! resigning herself, with her last breath, to the will of God; surrendering, without a murmur or a sigh of regret, a life which to her was very full of sweet attraction. What more could we have wished her to feel or to say? So Jesus prayed in the hour of his exceeding sorrow, leaving for us an example of the highest faith; "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." When the clock struck five, and the gray dawn was opening into the beautiful morning, the Divine will had been made known, and the gentle spirit of Ella had entered into rest. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Our hearts swell with emotion, and tears of irrepressible sorrow flow, as we gaze upon that brow, calm and beautiful in death, and reflect that we are beholding it for the last time on earth. But another

thought succeeds, and our sorrow is almost turned into joy, even while we gaze : — this form, so familiar and so loved, is the forsaken tenement ; the spirit, Ella's self, having received the baptism of immortality, has joined the great multitude of the redeemed before the throne of God.

“ As, bowed by sudden storms, the rose
Sinks on the garden's breast,
Down to the grave our sister goes,
In silence there to rest.

“ No more with us her tuneful voice
The hymn of praise shall swell ;
No more her cheerful heart rejoice
When peals the Sabbath bell.

“ Yet if, in yonder cloudless sphere,
Amid a sinless throng,
She utters in her Saviour's ear
The everlasting song, —

“ No more we'll mourn the absent friend,
But lift the earnest prayer,
And daily every effort bend
To rise and and join her there.”

1875

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